

SPECIAL BROADCASTING SERVICE (SBS)

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Until 1970, radio stations were prevented by law from broadcasting in foreign languages for more than 2.5 hours per week. In June 1975, two "experimental" radio stations began broadcasting: 2EA in Sydney and 3EA in Melbourne (EA stood for "Ethnic Australia"). In March 1976, the federal government established the Consultative Committee on Ethnic Broadcasting, followed by the National Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council in January 1977. Initially, it was considered feasible for ethnic broadcasting to be delivered by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC); however, this plan was abandoned in mid-1977. In October 1977, the government announced the creation of SBS as a new independent statutory authority for ethnic broadcasting. This was achieved by an amendment to the *Broadcasting Act 1942*. SBS formally came into existence on 1 January 1978. The inaugural chairman of SBS was Grisha Sklovsky, and the inaugural executive director was Ronald Fowell. The service was initially radio-only, and had oversight only of the two existing stations 2EA and 3EA. It was always intended that it would be enlarged, but this process was controversial – the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations wanted the television functions to be controlled by the ABC. In March 1979, the government set up the Ethnic Television Review Panel, which recommended that SBS expand into television. SBS TV began test transmissions in April 1979 when it showed various foreign language programs on ABV-2 Melbourne and ABN-2 Sydney on Sunday mornings. Full-time transmission began at 6:30 pm on 24 October 1980 (United Nations Day), as Channel 0/28. The first program shown was a documentary entitled *Who Are We?*, which was hosted by veteran news presenter Peter Luck. At the time, SBS was broadcasting on UHF Channel 28 and VHF Channel 0 (pronounced as "oh" and not "zero"), with a planned discontinuation of the latter at some time in the future. Bruce Gyngell, who introduced television to Australia in 1956, was given the task of introducing the first batch of programs on the new station. SBS programming content was initially imported from the countries-of-origin of Australia's major migrant communities and then subtitled in English. On 14 October 1983, the service expanded into Canberra, Cooma and Goulburn and, at the same time, changed its name to Network 0–28. Its new slogan was the long-running "Bringing the World Back Home". The network changed its name to SBS on 18 February 1985 and began daytime transmissions. SBS expanded to Brisbane, Adelaide, Newcastle, Wollongong and the Gold Coast in June of that year. On 5 January 1986, SBS ceased broadcasting on the VHF channel 0 frequency. Although many Australians at the time did not have UHF antennas, SBS's VHF licence had already been extended by a year at this stage and not all antennas had worked well with the low-frequency Channel 0 either. In August 1986, the government proposed legislation that would merge SBS into the ABC. This was highly unpopular with ethnic-minority communities, leading the Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke, to announce in 1987 that the proposed amalgamation would not proceed. The SBS Radio and Television Youth Orchestra was launched in 1988 with founding conductor Matthew Krel. Plans to introduce limited commercial-program sponsorship, as well as the establishment of SBS as an independent corporation with its own charter, were put in place in July 1989. *Eat Carpet*, showcasing local and international short films, was also launched in 1989. The proclamation of the Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991 officially made SBS a corporation in 1991. Throughout the early 1990s, SBS TV coverage was expanded further to include new areas such as the Latrobe Valley, Spencer Gulf, Darwin, northeast Tasmania, Cairns and Townsville. In 1992, SBS's radio and television facilities were gradually moved to new headquarters in Artarmon, New South Wales, from their original studios at Bondi Junction (radio) and Milsoms Point (television). The new building was officially opened on 10 November 1993 by the prime minister, Paul Keating. A national radio network was launched in January 1994. The new service initially covered Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Darwin, while original stations 2EA and 3EA were renamed Radio Sydney and Radio Melbourne respectively. The new national service was launched on a separate frequency in Sydney and Melbourne in July of that year. Throughout 1996, radio services were expanded to cover Hobart and Canberra, while SBS TV's coverage was further expanded to include the New South Wales North Coast and Albury. Comedy Central's *South Park*, SBS's most successful imported television series, was first aired in 1997. A time-delay system was installed for South Australia in May 1999, shortly before the establishment of the Transmission Services division (intended to manage transmission and self-help services). A New Media division, responsible for the SBS website, was established at the start of 2000 in time for the first webcast of the Australian Film Institute Awards. Ratings continued to increase through 2000 to 2001 – increasing to an overall 5.2% average weekly audience share. In April 2003, SBS Radio dropped four languages and added four others while increasing the broadcast hours for Cantonese, Mandarin, and Arabic. SBS broadcast the 2004 Athens Olympics in partnership with the Seven Network. SBS broadcast Euro 2008 in Austria and Switzerland. Tagalog, Vietnamese and Arabic language broadcasts were added to SBS's *WorldWatch* television schedule in 2003. The Vietnamese community protested the Vietnamese-language service, which was just taken from VTV4, Vietnam's government-controlled national broadcaster. They found the portrayal of the communist Vietnamese flag and Ho Chi Minh offensive and stated that the program's lack of reporting on political arrests and religious oppression was also offensive, especially to those who had fled the country following the Vietnam War. This backlash prompted SBS to display disclaimers before all externally produced bulletins in order to distance it from the content. In May 2008, SBS unveiled a new-look logo as well as a new backronymic slogan: "Six Billion Stories and counting". On 8 May 2012, SBS received \$158 million in government funding, of which \$15 million would be used yearly, to fund the formation of a new free-to-air channel devoted to the indigenous peoples of Australia, which would replace the existing National Indigenous Television on 12 December 2012, with 90% of its staff transferring to this new channel. On 12 December 2012, NITV was re-launched as an SBS-operated free-to-air channel, replacing SBS4. SBS is a supporter of same-sex marriage and pulled an anti-marriage equality ad ahead of its telecast of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Then managing director, Michael Ebeid, defended SBS's position on the issue. On 17 November 2015, the new food channel, SBS Food Network, was launched. On 17 November 2018, the channel became SBS Food. In June 2016, SBS announced that SBS 2 was set to be rebranded as SBS Viceland with content from US-Canadian youth Vice Media from November 2016. 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The **Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)** is a hybrid-funded Australian public broadcasting radio, online and television network. About 80 per cent of funding for the SBS Corporation is derived from the Australian Government. SBS operates five TV channels (SBS, SBS Viceland, SBS World Movies, SBS Food and NITV) and eight radio networks (SBS Radios 1, 2 and 3, Arabic24, SBS Chill, SBS PopDesi and SBS PopAsia). SBS Online is home to SBS On Demand video streaming service. The stated purpose of SBS is "to provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society". SBS is one of five main free-to-air networks in Australia. As a result of extensive post-World War II immigration to Australia, the federal government began to consider the need for "ethnic broadcasting" – programming targeted at ethnic minorities and mostly delivered in languages other than English. Until 1970, radio stations were prevented by law from broadcasting in foreign languages for more than 2.5 hours per week. In June 1975, two "experimental" radio stations began broadcasting: 2EA in Sydney and 3EA in Melbourne (EA stood for "Ethnic Australia"). In March 1976, the federal government established the Consultative Committee on Ethnic Broadcasting, followed by the National Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council in January 1977. Initially, it was considered feasible for ethnic broadcasting to be delivered by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC); however, this plan was abandoned in mid-1977. In October 1977, the government announced the creation of SBS as a new independent statutory authority for ethnic broadcasting. This was achieved by an amendment to the *Broadcasting Act 1942*. SBS formally came into existence on 1 January 1978.¹ The inaugural chairman of SBS was Grisha Sklovsky, and the inaugural executive director was Ronald Fowell. The service was initially radio-only, and had oversight only of the two existing stations 2EA and 3EA. It was always intended that it would be enlarged, but this process was controversial – the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations wanted the television functions to be controlled by the ABC. In March 1979, the government set up the Ethnic Television Review Panel, which recommended that SBS expand into television. SBS TV began test transmissions in April 1979 when it showed various foreign language programs on ABV-2 Melbourne and ABN-2 Sydney on Sunday mornings. Full-time transmission began at 6:30 pm on 24 October 1980 (United Nations Day), as Channel 0/28. The first program shown was a documentary entitled *Who Are We?*, which was hosted by veteran news presenter Peter Luck. At the time, SBS was broadcasting on UHF Channel 28 and VHF Channel 0 (pronounced as "oh" and not "zero"), with a planned discontinuation of the latter at some time in the future. Bruce Gyngell, who introduced television to Australia in 1956, was given the task of introducing the first batch of programs on the new station. SBS programming content was initially imported from the countries-of-origin of Australia's major migrant communities and then subtitled in English. On 14 October 1983, the service expanded into Canberra, Cooma and Goulburn and, at the same time, changed its name to Network 0–28. Its new slogan was the long-running "Bringing the World Back Home". The network changed its name to SBS on 18 February 1985 and began daytime transmissions. SBS expanded to Brisbane, Adelaide, Newcastle, Wollongong and the Gold Coast in June of that year. On 5 January 1986, SBS ceased broadcasting on the VHF channel 0 frequency. Although many Australians at the time did not have UHF antennas, SBS's VHF licence had already been extended by a year at this stage and not all antennas had worked well with the low-frequency Channel 0 either. In August 1986, the government proposed legislation that would merge SBS into the ABC. This was highly unpopular with ethnic-minority communities, leading the Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke, to announce in 1987 that the proposed amalgamation would not proceed. The SBS Radio and Television Youth Orchestra was launched in 1988 with founding conductor Matthew Krel. Plans to introduce limited commercial-program sponsorship, as well as the establishment of SBS as an independent corporation with its own charter, were put in place in July 1989. *Eat Carpet*, showcasing local and international short films, was also launched in 1989. The proclamation of the Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991 officially made SBS a corporation in 1991. Throughout the early 1990s, SBS TV coverage was expanded further to include new areas such as the Latrobe Valley, Spencer Gulf, Darwin, northeast Tasmania, Cairns and Townsville. In 1992, SBS's radio and television facilities were gradually moved to new headquarters in Artarmon, New South Wales, from their original studios at Bondi Junction (radio) and Milsons Point (television). The new building was officially opened on 10 November 1993 by the prime minister, Paul Keating. A national radio network was launched in January 1994. The new service initially covered Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Darwin, while original stations 2EA and 3EA were renamed Radio Sydney and Radio Melbourne respectively. The new national service was launched on a separate frequency in Sydney and Melbourne in July of that year. Throughout 1996, radio services were expanded to cover Hobart and Canberra, while SBS TV's coverage was further expanded to include the New South Wales North Coast and Albury. Comedy Central's *South Park*, SBS's most successful imported television series, was first aired in 1997. A time-delay system was installed for South Australia in May 1999, shortly before the establishment of the Transmission Services division (intended to manage transmission and self-help services). A New Media division, responsible for the SBS website, was established at the start of 2000 in time for the first webcast of the Australian Film Institute Awards. Ratings continued to increase through 2000 to 2001 – increasing to an overall 5.2% average weekly audience share. In April 2003, SBS Radio dropped four languages and added four others while increasing the broadcast hours for Cantonese, Mandarin, and Arabic. SBS broadcast the 2004 Athens Olympics in partnership with the Seven Network. SBS broadcast Euro 2008 in Austria and Switzerland. Tagalog, Vietnamese and Arabic language broadcasts were added to SBS's *WorldWatch* television schedule in 2003. The Vietnamese community protested the Vietnamese-language service, which was just taken from VTV4, Vietnam's government-controlled national broadcaster. They found the portrayal of the communist Vietnamese flag and Ho Chi Minh offensive and stated that the program's lack of reporting on political arrests and religious oppression was also offensive, especially to

those who had fled the country following the Vietnam War. This backlash prompted SBS to display disclaimers before all externally produced bulletins in order to distance it from the content. In May 2008, SBS unveiled a new-look logo as well as a new backronymic slogan: "Six Billion Stories and counting". On 8 May 2012, SBS received \$158 million in government funding, of which \$15 million would be used yearly, to fund the formation of a new free-to-air channel devoted to the indigenous peoples of Australia, which would replace the existing National Indigenous Television on 12 December 2012, with 90% of its staff transferring to this new channel. On 12 December 2012, NITV was re-launched as an SBS-operated free-to-air channel, replacing SBS4. SBS is a supporter of same-sex marriage and pulled an anti-marriage equality ad ahead of its telecast of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Then managing director, Michael Ebeid, defended SBS's position on the issue. On 17 November 2015, the new food channel, SBS Food Network, was launched. On 17 November 2018, the channel became SBS Food. In June 2016, SBS announced that SBS 2 was set to be rebranded as SBS Viceland with content from US-Canadian youth Vice Media from November 2016. On 1 July 2019, SBS relaunched their former pay-TV movie channel, World Movies as SBS World Movies and it became a free-to-air channel.